

Ephesians

Paul and the Ephesians

Lesson #1 for July 1, 2023

Scriptures: Acts 18:18-21; 19:13-20:1; 20:17-38; Ephesians 1:1-2,9-10; 3:13; 6:21-24.

1. As we begin this study of Ephesians, consider what the Bible study guide says.

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] Paul has a profound purpose that motivates his letter. **Partly because of his imprisonment** (*Eph. 3:13, Eph. 6:20*), and **partly because of ongoing persecution and temptations**, the Ephesians are tempted to lose heart. Paul reminds them of what happened when they were converted, accepting Christ as their Savior and becoming part of the church. **They have become Christ's body** (*Eph. 1:19–23, Eph. 4:1–16*), **the building materials in a temple** (*Eph. 2:19–22*), **the bride of Christ** (*Eph. 5:21–33*), and a **well-equipped army** (*Eph. 6:10–20*). **They play a strategic role in fulfilling God's grand plan, to unite everything in Christ** (*Eph. 1:9, 10*). Paul writes to awaken the believers in Ephesus to their full identity and privileges as followers of Christ.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, June 24.^{†‡§}

2. Writing from house arrest in Rome during his first imprisonment there, Paul was addressing the group of Christians scattered in various communities in Asia Minor (western Turkey in modern times). Ephesus had become the distribution center for the Christian churches. So, Paul addressed his letter first to them. Paul had had much time to think while under house arrest; so, his vision of what is involved in the great controversy had been massively expanded.

[BSG:] The first lesson for this quarter sketches the background to the study of the entire Epistle to the Ephesians and focuses on several major themes. **First**, we learn about Paul's purpose in writing his Epistle to the Ephesians: to help the Ephesians remember their identity and role in God's kingdom and His plans. **Second**, we get to know the Ephesians better. We virtually visit Ephesus, walk on its streets, listening to the people of the city talk and hearing their interest in magic and the otherworld. We watch hundreds of ships anchored in their port, and we visit the impressive temple of Artemis, while seeing people of all classes and ages rushing to join the riot in the amphitheater. **Third**, we study the literary structure of the epistle and thus form a panoramic view of the apostle's flow of thoughts and his main subjects. **Fourth**, we discover that Paul's all-pervasive theme in this epistle is threefold: Jesus Christ, His love for His church, and His work through the church for the salvation of humanity [and its effect on the entire universe].—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 13.^{†‡}

Ephesians 1:8b-10: ^{8b}In all his wisdom and insight ⁹God did what he had purposed, and made known to us the secret plan he had already decided to complete by means of Christ. ¹⁰This plan, which God will complete when the time is right, is **to bring all creation together, everything in heaven and on earth**, with Christ as head.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The*

*Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Ephesians 1:8b-10). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].[†]

Ephesians 3:7-10: ⁷ I was made a servant of the gospel by God's special gift, which he gave me through the working of his power. ⁸ I am less than the least of all God's people; yet God gave me this privilege of taking to the Gentiles the Good News about the infinite riches of Christ, ⁹ and of making all people see how God's secret plan is to be put into effect. God, who is the Creator of all things, kept his secret hidden through all the past ages, ¹⁰ in order that at the present time, **by means of the church, the angelic rulers and powers in the heavenly world might learn of his wisdom in all its different forms.**—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

Colossians 1:19-20: ¹⁹ For it was by God's own decision that the Son has in himself the full nature of God. ²⁰ **Through the Son, then, God decided to bring the whole universe back to himself.** God made peace through his Son's blood on the cross [footnote: *his Son's sacrificial death*] and **so brought back to himself all things, both on earth and in heaven.**—*Good News Bible*.^{*†§}

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] **Through the plan of salvation a larger purpose is to be wrought out even than the salvation of man and the redemption of the earth. Through the revelation of the character of God in Christ, the beneficence of the divine government would be manifested before the universe, the charge of Satan refuted, the nature and results of sin made plain, and the perpetuity of the law fully demonstrated.**—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*,* February 13, 1893, par. 12; *The Signs of the Times*,*[€] December 22, 1914, par. 4; *That I May Know Him**[€] 366.4.[†]

[EGW:] **But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe.** To this result of His great sacrifice—its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man—the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, **will draw all unto Me.**” John 12:31, 32. The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 68.2-69.0 [1890]; *Reflecting Christ**[€] 50.3 [1985].[†]

3. In any communication, it is very important not only to understand the situation of the author of the communication, but also to understand the situation of the person or group of persons to whom it was addressed. See the tentative chronology of the book of Acts, Paul, and the early church including some connections with Ephesus.

4. **Focusing on his work at Ephesus, we see the tentative chronology of Paul's relationship to Ephesus (based on the Bible study guide for Monday):** For a more extensive chronology see: Tentative Chronology of the Book of Acts on www.theox.org

A.D. 52: Paul's initial, brief visit to Ephesus (Acts 18:18-21)

A.D. 53-56: Paul's three-year ministry in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-20:1); he composed 1 Corinthians near the end of his stay there (1 Corinthians 16:5-9)

A.D. 57: While at Miletus, Paul met with the elders from Ephesus (Acts 20:17-38)

A.D. 62: Paul composed his letter to the Ephesians, probably from confinement in Rome [Carefully aligning biblical prophecy with dating from Paul's letters shows complete harmony and no mismatching of dates.]

[BSG:] Ephesus was one of the largest cities of the Roman Empire, with a population of about two hundred fifty thousand. [Only Rome, Antioch in Syria, and Alexandria in Egypt were larger.] It was the capital of one of the empire's richest provinces, the province of Asia, which covered much of what we know today as Asia Minor [western Turkey]. In Paul's day, the province was enjoying a time of growth and prosperity. A port city, Ephesus was also at the crossroads of important land routes. While the people worshiped many deities in the city, Artemis, regarded as the protector goddess of the city, was supreme. Her worship was the focus of civic ceremonies, athletic games, and annual celebrations. (**Artemis was called Diana by the Romans**; see Acts 19:24, 35, KJV; NKJV.)—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, June 25.^{†‡§}

5. Having finished 1.5 years in Corinth, we find Paul on his way back to Jerusalem via his home church in Antioch, Syria. He stopped briefly at Ephesus, spoke with the Jews there, and left Aquilla and Priscilla to carry on the work until he had a chance to return. Later, he returned and spent three years with the Ephesians and the other churches in Asia Minor.
6. Ephesus was a huge religious center for followers of Artemis/Diana, whose temple there was four times as large as the Parthenon in Athens.
7. Acts 19:1-12 point out that Paul and his associates had an enormous impact on the people in Ephesus. There were people in Ephesus claiming to be exorcists, casting demons out of people.

Acts 19:13-20: ¹³ Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims." ¹⁴ Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. ¹⁵ But the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?" ¹⁶ And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. ¹⁷ And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled. ¹⁸ Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. ¹⁹ And **a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them** in the sight

of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver [wages for 50,000 days].²⁰ So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.—*English Standard Version*.^{*†‡}

[BSG:] The story of the exorcists misusing the names of Jesus and Paul (*Acts 19:13–20*; see Sunday’s study) helps explain why Paul uses so much language about power in Ephesians. Some new believers, under fresh conviction of the sovereignty of Jesus, throw their expensive magic manuals into the flames. Thanks to the discovery of some two hundred fifty papyri dealing with magic, as well as other finds, we have ample illustrations of rituals, spells, formulas, curses, et cetera, similar to those likely featured in these manuals of magic. The volumes had advised believers how to conduct such rituals to persuade gods, goddesses, and spirit powers to do whatever they would ask.

Luke tells us that these volumes were worth 50,000 silver coins, or 50,000 days of wages. (In today’s setting, if you allow for \$80/day of wages for a skilled laborer, this amounts to \$4 million!) This detail demonstrates the importance and centrality of these volumes to their everyday lives. “It took the sovereign intervention of God for them to be sufficiently convicted that they should completely repent of their ongoing utilization of amulets, charms, invocations, and traditional means of gaining spiritual power.”—Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), p. 34.

We come to understand that Ephesians was written to believers who needed instruction about “how to cope with the continuing influence and attacks of the sinister cosmic ‘powers.’ ”—Clinton E. Arnold, *Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1992), p. 165. Paul’s response is the Epistle to the Ephesians, in which he points to Christ as the One who has been exalted above every power (*Eph. 1:20–23*) and emphasizes the superiority of the strength that God provides to believers (*Eph. 2:15–19, Eph. 3:14–21, Eph. 6:10–20*)—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Friday, June 30.^{‡§}

8. The burning of books has occurred through history in a number of different settings.

[BSG:] **Contemporary intellectuals, such as Rebecca Knuth**, former chairwoman of the Library and Information Science program at the University of Hawaii, in her *Burning Books and Leveling Libraries: Extremist Violence and Cultural Destruction* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), **concludes that book burning constitutes the destruction of human cultural heritage**. In his *Burning the Books: A History of the Deliberate Destruction of Knowledge* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 2020), Richard Ovenden, director of the Bodleian Libraries at the University of Oxford, argues that humanity must reject book burning and preserve human knowledge and culture. The **burning of mostly Jewish books by the Nazis in 1933** or the destruction of Western capitalist-leaning books by **Mao Zedong’s Red Guards in 1966 are used as classical examples of book burning** with the political purpose of controlling the population’s access to information and imposing a new

culture, ideology, historical interpretation, and worldview. The story of insurgents who burned thousands of ancient African manuscripts in **Timbuktu in 2013** is used as an example of indiscriminate extremist religious book burning. During that time, a few Christian pastors from various denominations were condemned as bigots or intolerant when they conducted book-burning services, calling for witchcraft books to be burned.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 15.†‡§

[BSG:] How can we understand the book burning described in Acts 19:19? Several points should be noted:

This book burning was a voluntary act of those who had converted to Christianity from paganism and magic. **They did not destroy the libraries and the properties of other people, but they burned their own books of witchcraft, books they themselves had used in practicing their pagan religions.** By this voluntary act, they publicly proclaimed that, once they received the call of Jesus Christ to join His kingdom, they were cutting themselves off from their sinful past. They did not want to have anything further to do with Satan and his demonic activities.

Two hundred fifty years later, Emperor Diocletian ordered all Christians to bring their sacred books to be burned if they wanted to avoid being burned themselves. Some Christians complied and handed their Scriptures over to the Roman authorities to be burned; these Christians were called *traditores*, or “those who handed over” their books. Other Christians, however, preferred to be burned themselves rather than betray or renounce the Word of God. Thus, while the book burning in Acts 19 was a voluntary and joyous proclamation of liberation from the snares of sin and Satan, Diocletian’s book burning was a violent and oppressive political and ideological persecution of Christianity, with the purpose of annihilating the people of God and imposing the pagan religion.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 15-16.†‡§

9. Paul was anxious that his converts to Christianity continue to grow in their spiritual lives.

Ephesians 4:1-8,11-16: ¹I urge you, then—I who am a prisoner because I serve the Lord: live a life that measures up to the standard God set when he called you. ²Be always humble, gentle, and patient. Show your love by being tolerant with one another. ³Do your best to preserve the unity which the Spirit gives by means of the peace that binds you together. ⁴**There is one body and one Spirit, just as there is one hope to which God has called you.** ⁵**There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism;** ⁶**there is one God and Father of all, who is Lord of all, works through all, and is in all.**

⁷ Each one of us has received a special gift in proportion to what Christ has given. ⁸As the scripture says:

“When he went up to the very heights,
he took many captives with him;
he gave gifts to people.”...

¹¹It was he who “gave gifts”; he appointed some to be apostles, others to be prophets, others to be evangelists, others to be pastors and teachers. ¹²He did this to prepare all God’s people for the work of Christian service, in order to build up the body of Christ. ¹³**And so we shall all come together to that oneness in our faith and in our knowledge of the Son of God; we shall become mature people, reaching to the very height of Christ’s full stature.** ¹⁴**Then we shall no longer be children, carried by the waves and blown about by every shifting wind of the teaching of deceitful people, who lead others into error by the tricks they invent.** ¹⁵**Instead, by speaking the truth in a spirit of love, we must grow up in every way to Christ, who is the head.** ¹⁶Under his control all the different parts of the body fit together, and the whole body is held together by every joint with which it is provided. So when each separate part works as it should, the whole body grows and builds itself up through love.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

10. Paul called for the Christians in Ephesus to meet together to help each other and to grow in their Christianity so they would not be tossed about like children carried by the wind and waves and blown about by the “restricting wind” of the teaching of deceitful people.

Ephesians 2:19-22: ¹⁹ So then, you Gentiles are not foreigners or strangers any longer; you are now fellow-citizens with God’s people and members of the family of God. ²⁰You, too, are built upon the foundation laid by the apostles and prophets, the cornerstone being Christ Jesus himself. ²¹He is the one who holds the whole building together and makes it grow into a sacred temple dedicated to the Lord. ²²In union with him you too are being built together with all the others into a place where God lives through his Spirit.—*Good News Bible*.^{*}

11. Paul called for the entire church to be built with Jesus Christ as the chief Cornerstone.
12. But, you can be sure that the Devil was not asleep as he saw the progress that Paul and his associates were making.

Acts 19:21-20:1: ²¹ After these things had happened, Paul made up his mind to travel through Macedonia and Achaia and go on to Jerusalem. “After I go there,” he said, “I must also see Rome.” ²²So he sent Timothy and Erastus, two of his helpers, to Macedonia, while he spent more time in the province of Asia.

²³ It was at this time that there was serious trouble in Ephesus because of the Way of the Lord. ²⁴A certain silversmith named Demetrius made silver models of the temple of the goddess Artemis, and his business brought a great deal of profit to the workers. ²⁵So he called them all together with others whose work was like theirs and said to them, “Men, you know that our prosperity comes from this work. ²⁶Now, you can see and hear for yourselves what this fellow Paul is doing. **He says that gods made by human hands are not gods at all, and he has succeeded in convincing many people, both here in Ephesus and in nearly the whole province of Asia.** ²⁷There is the danger, then, that this business of ours will get a bad name. Not only that, but there is also the danger that the temple of the great

goddess Artemis will come to mean nothing and that her greatness will be destroyed—the goddess worshipped by everyone in Asia and in all the world!” [How did Paul have such an impact on that large city?]

²⁸ As the crowd heard these words, they became furious and started shouting, “Great is Artemis of Ephesus!” ²⁹The uproar spread throughout the whole city. The mob seized Gaius and Aristarchus, two Macedonians who were travelling with Paul, and rushed with them to the theatre. ³⁰Paul himself wanted to go before the crowd, but the believers would not let him. ³¹Some of the provincial authorities, who were his friends, also sent him a message begging him not to show himself in the theatre. ³²Meanwhile the whole meeting was in an uproar: some people were shouting one thing, others were shouting something else, because **most of them did not even know why they had come together**. ³³Some of the people concluded that Alexander was responsible, since the Jews made him go up to the front. Then Alexander motioned with his hand for the people to be silent, and he tried to make a speech of defence [*sic*]. ³⁴But when they recognized that he was a Jew, they all shouted together the same thing for two hours: “Great is Artemis of Ephesus!”

³⁵ At last the town clerk was able to calm the crowd. “Fellow-Ephesians!” he said. “Everyone knows that the city of Ephesus is the keeper of the temple of the great Artemis and of the sacred stone that fell down from heaven. ³⁶Nobody can deny these things. So then, you must calm down and not do anything reckless. ³⁷You have brought these men here even though they have not robbed temples or said evil things about our goddess. ³⁸If Demetrius and his workers have an accusation against anyone, we have the authorities and the regular days for court; charges can be made there. ³⁹But if there is something more that you want, it will have to be settled in a legal meeting of citizens. ⁴⁰For after what has happened today, there is the danger that we will be accused of a riot. There is no excuse for all this uproar, and we would not be able to give a good reason for it.” ⁴¹After saying this, he dismissed the meeting.

^{20:1} After the uproar died down, Paul called together the believers and with words of encouragement said goodbye to them. Then he left and went on to Macedonia.—*Good News Bible*. *†‡

13. Do we see such direct conflicts going on in our day? Paul, trying to introduce the truth of Scripture and the truth about Jesus Christ, was in direct opposition to those practicing witchcraft, idolatry, and fertility cult religions in connection with the Temple of Artemis/Diana. After Paul had that episode with the silversmiths, he felt it was necessary to leave Ephesus. He traveled to Macedonia and down to Corinth where he needed to do some follow-up work. From Corinth, he planned to take a boat to Antioch in Syria and then travel to Jerusalem. Just before getting on the boat, he found out that some people had boarded the boat with intention to kill him after he got on the ship. So, he did not get on the ship, but rather, he walked around to Asia Minor, got on a different boat, and was able to reach Jerusalem in time for Pentecost. Was Paul instructed by God to go to Jerusalem? Why did “prophets” tell him not to go?

14. There is considerable evidence that Paul was trying to touch all bases in establishing firm churches in the city of Ephesus and in the surrounding territories.

[BSG:] Paul's witness in the large, sophisticated city of Ephesus was so effective that it impacted an important economic engine for the city, tourism focused on the Temple of Artemis. And what a temple it was! This magnificent structure was composed partly of 127 pillars, each 60 feet high, of Parian marble, a pure-white, flawless marble highly prized for sculptures. Thirty-six of these pillars were sculpted and overlaid with gold, earning the temple its reputation as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, June 26.‡

15. Notice what Paul was doing during those 3 years in Ephesus.

Acts 19:1-7: ¹And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. ²And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, **we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.**" ³And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism." ⁴And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." ⁵On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. ⁷There were about twelve men in all.—*English Standard Version*.*†

16. ***Was that the same as happened to the people in Jerusalem at Pentecost? And to the group at the home of Cornelius?***

[EGW:] "There were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven." During the dispersion the Jews had been scattered to almost every part of the inhabited world, and in their exile they had learned to speak various languages. Many of these Jews were on this occasion in Jerusalem, attending the religious festivals then in progress. Every known tongue was represented by those assembled. This diversity of languages would have been a great hindrance to the proclamation of the gospel; God therefore in a miraculous manner supplied the deficiency of the apostles. **The Holy Spirit did for them that which they could not have accomplished for themselves in a lifetime. They could now proclaim the truths of the gospel abroad, speaking with accuracy the languages of those for whom they were laboring. This miraculous gift was a strong evidence to the world that their commission bore the signet of Heaven. From this time forth the language of the disciples was pure, simple, and accurate, whether they spoke in their native tongue or in a foreign language.**—Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles** 39.2-40.0.††

17. Unfortunately, as we know already, Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and had to be protected by the Roman government and taken to Caesarea Maritima where he remained in prison for two years. Then, when his case came up before the judge, he appealed to Rome. Then, he had that journey on the boat that ended in disaster outside the island of

Malta. The next spring, they got a new boat and traveled to Rome. After having had a brief trial, he apparently was allowed to stay in a home that he paid for himself while under house arrest. It is from there that he wrote the books of Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians, and possibly the book of Hebrews. He was supported by the Philippians.

18. Let us now take a quick look at the themes in the book of Ephesians.

[BSG:] **What themes echo through the letter as a whole?**

- I. Opening Greeting (*Eph. 1:1, 2*)
- II. Introductory Blessing (*Eph. 1:3–14*)
- III. Praying for Believers to Receive Christ-Focused Wisdom (*Eph. 1:15–23*)
- IV. Once Spiritually Dead; Now Exalted With Christ (*Eph. 2:1–10*)
- V. Christ's Creation of the Church Out of Jews and Gentiles (*Eph. 2:11–22*)
- VI. Paul as Preacher of Christ to the Gentiles (*Eph. 3:1–13*)
- VII. Praying for Believers to Experience the Love of Christ (*Eph. 3:14–21*)
- VIII. Hold On to the Spirit-Inspired Unity of the Church (*Eph. 4:1–16*)
- IX. Live the New, Unity-Nurturing Life (*Eph. 4:17–32*)
- X. Walk in Love, Light, and Wisdom (*Eph. 5:1–20*)
- XI. Practice Christ-Shaped Life in the Christian Household (*Eph. 5:21–6:9*)
- XII. Stand Together: The Church as the Army of God (*Eph. 6:10–20*)
- XIII. Closing Greeting (*Eph. 6:21–24*)

What key theme seems to come through in this letter? What does it say to you? What specific point or points touch home?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide for Tuesday, June 27.†§**

19. One of the interesting notions that we could easily overlook is the fact that Paul was writing to a group of people, few of whom were able to read. So, he recognized that this letter would be read by someone standing in front of each church group. How do you suppose this was actually carried out? Did the reader just read straight through the book? How much would you be able to comprehend if you heard the book read? Tychicus was the one who had carried the book from Paul to the Ephesians. Was he allowed time to explain as they read? Or, did they get together in small groups later to discuss the different questions that had arisen? Or, both? Paul had some very important things to say about marriage, about children, and even about slaves. (See Ephesians 5:21-6:9.)

20. While some modern-day skeptics still question whether Paul could have written the book of Ephesians, virtually all conservative scholars agree that he was the author. In Ephesians 1:1 and 3:1, Paul identified himself as the author.

21. ***When a church's spiritual leader is imprisoned, what effect do you think it might have on the congregation as a whole?***

[BSG:] **In the church of which you are a part, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, God is drawing together a transnational, multilingual, multiracial, cross-cultural community (*Rev. 14:6, 7*) that points the way to the fulfillment of His plan to unite all things in Jesus (*Eph. 1:9, 10*). How can we work in concert with God's grand plan?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, June 29.†§**

22. Paul constantly looked forward to the future hope of Christ's second coming.

[BSG:] We can much more easily understand Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians if we look at it in the context of the book of Acts. Several narrative aspects of the Acts of the Apostles are especially relevant for the birth of the Ephesian church:

1. Accompanied by Aquila and Priscilla (*Acts 18:18*), Paul seems to have been the first to briefly preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in Ephesus, where he first contacted the Jews (*Acts 18:19*). Unlike the Jews in Corinth, who rejected and persecuted Paul (*Acts 18:6, 12, 13*), the Jews in Ephesus initially appeared more open to the gospel (*Acts 18:20*). It was only later that some of the Jews in Ephesus became obstinate and rejected Paul's message (*Acts 19:8, 9*). However, these Jews did not appeal to the authorities to throw Paul out of the city.
2. After Paul's first departure from Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila continued the gospel work there, being joined later by Apollos of Alexandria (*Acts 18:24-26*). Their work resulted in a fledgling community of Christians (*Acts 19:1*).
3. Apollos, Priscilla, and Aquila seemed to be well versed in Christian teaching. However, the Ephesians received instruction for a limited time before Apollos left for Corinth. Possibly for this reason, the Ephesian disciples had a limited understanding of the gospel and what Christianity was about. The disciples there did not even know about the Holy Spirit (*Acts 19:2, 3*). For this reason, when Paul returned to Ephesus, he decided to spend more time there and provide the needed solid theological foundation to the church both in the city and in the entire region of Asia Minor (*Acts 19:10*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 14.†§

23. As Paul traveled from place to place in Asia Minor, reinforcing the church groups that he had helped in establishing, he was constantly asking questions of the various groups to see how far they understood the truth of the gospel.

[BSG:] It is important to note that one of Paul's most evident ways to test the veracity and quality of Christianity was to ask the church members whether they had received the Holy Spirit (*Acts 19:2*) and whether they correctly understood who Jesus was, who God was, and how people are saved through baptism in Jesus Christ (*Acts 19:2-5*). For this reason, when Paul was writing to the Ephesians many years later, he returned to, and insisted upon, these crucial topics (*see, for instance, Ephesians 4*). These topics were determinant to the Christian identity and life, both at the level of the individual and of groups (family and church). There is no Christian church without Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Father.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 14.†§

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Last Modified: June 17, 2023